

## **People's Theatre Arts Group Limited – Safeguarding Children Policy** **(Updated September 2022)**

### **Definitions:**

A Child: A child is defined as a young person under the age of 18. (UN Convention adopted by all countries in the UK)

Child Abuse: *“Children may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission<sup>1</sup> on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s), or a carer (i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of the child).”*

For those working in child protection areas this definition is broken down further to recognise the types of abuse.

- Physical injury
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical neglect
- Non-organic Failure to Thrive

### **Safeguarding Children Policy statement:**

#### **General principles and policy:**

1. The People's Theatre Arts Group is committed to providing a safe environment where children are able to participate in Youth Theatre or any other PTAG activity without fear of abuse or harm, giving youngsters the ability to express their views on any issues or decisions that affect them.
2. The Management Committee acknowledge that child abuse is a potential problem in all aspects of a child's life. The Management Committee is committed to taking positive steps to prevent such abuse of children involved in any activities associated with the People's Theatre Arts Group.
3. It is the responsibility of **all members** of the People's Theatre to be aware of and adhere to the safeguarding children policies and procedures currently in force.
4. The Management Committee will appoint a Safeguarding Children Officer, whose responsibilities are outlined later in this document.
5. The Management Committee recognises its legal obligations to ensure that adults who undertake regular duties with children must be registered with the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service).
6. It is the clear policy of the Management Committee that any adults who undertake regular duties as Youth Theatre leaders or helpers, either voluntarily or paid, children must be registered with the DBS before they are able to work with any children without close supervision.

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<sup>1</sup> This means children at risk through either something a person has done to them OR something a person is failing to do for them.

7. Individual licences or a Body of Persons Licence will be obtained, where necessary, for all children involved in Youth Theatre or PTAG performances in accordance with the guidelines provided by Newcastle City Council Education Welfare Service.
8. Where a child engaged in a Youth Theatre or PTAG production is doing so under a performance licence then the PTAG will ensure that an approved Chaperone/Matron is available to supervise the welfare of that child. A child may also be supervised by his/her parent.
9. Where children are involved in a **performance** capacity in a PTAG production, the director will discuss with the Safeguarding Officer, arrangements for the child's/children's welfare before the commencement of the rehearsal period.
10. In accordance with Child Employment Law, once a child reaches the age of 16 years and has completed Year 11 at school, no special measures need to be in place.
11. Directors and Stage Managers who are involved in any production that uses children in any capacity will be given advice on safeguarding children matters.
12. The Youth Leader or Director or Stage Manager will maintain a register of all children involved in Youth Theatre or rehearsal or performance activities, and the names and emergency contact numbers should be readily to hand at any time such activities, are taking place. The contents of name lists, and contact details are not to be divulged to unauthorised persons and must be treated in accordance with data protection legislation.
13. Collection of children from any theatre activity is the responsibility of the parent, or guardian, and it is also their responsibility to ensure they get home safely.
14. Where child abuse is suspected or if allegations have been made against a member of the theatre, then the Safeguarding Children Officer must be notified immediately.

#### **Safeguarding Children Officer:**

The Management Committee will appoint a suitably qualified Safeguarding Children Officer who should be registered with the DBS and is responsible for;

- advising the Management Committee on best practice in respect of Safeguarding Children matters
- ensuring the Safeguarding Children policy and procedures are current and up to date
- ensuring that those concerned are aware of the policy and have read and understood it.
- ensuring that they have to hand the Education Welfare Service and police contact numbers
- seeking advice and guidance from the local authority Education Welfare Service (EWS) and police child protection officers.
- agreeing procedures with the Management Committee and EWS on how best to deal with allegations of impropriety or abuse by a child against a member of the PTAG
- appointing (when required) suitably qualified and Local Authority approved Matrons / Chaperones for children in performance.
- ensuring that duties of Matrons & chaperones are maintained and up to date
- Ensuring applications are made for appropriate children in performances licences.
- Ensuring suitable provision of dressing room accommodation for productions when children are used in performances.

**Working with children:**

All Youth Leaders, Directors, Stage Managers, or any adults working with children will ensure that:

- Children are treated with respect
- They recognise that some issues are confidential
- They are aware that someone might misinterpret their actions or those of other adults even if they are well-intentioned.
- They respect a child's right to privacy
- They provide time for children to talk to adults
- They encourage children to respect and care for others
- They take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- They refer (not investigate) any suspicions or allegations of abuse to the Management Committee appointed Safeguarding Children Officer
- They have received copies of the 'good practice guidelines' and 'how to react and listen to a complaint'
- They are aware of the requirements for DBS registration, children in performance guidelines and data protection requirements when dealing with personal information e.g., telephone numbers and contact details.

**Collecting Children from the theatre activities:**

- It is the responsibility of the parent, or guardian, to ensure that children get home safely from theatre activities.
- Children should be collected from theatre activities by a parent, or guardian, responsible adult or older brother or sister. Children being collected by an adult, brother or sister who is not that child's parent should provide written advice to authorise this.
- If children are not going to be collected from a theatre activity, then written advice should be provided to this effect.
- Children who are performing as part of a licence to perform or assisting backstage or front of house during a performance will be under the direction of licensed matron(s) and will be required to be collected and signed out from the auditorium after the performance has finished.

**Contact Details:**

- EWS Tel: 0191 277 4500
- <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/education-and-learning/extra-curricular-activities/children-in-performance-paid-modelling-and-sporting-activities>.
- Northumbria Police CPO Tel101

**Other reference material:**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following management Committee policy and procedures:

- Peoples Theatre Arts Group good practice guidelines
- Guidelines on Legislation for Children in Performance
- LTG Procedures for obtaining DBS registration for adults that regularly work with children

## **People's Theatre Arts Group Safeguarding Children Policy**

The following 'good practice guidelines' and the 'reacting and listening guidelines' are part of the People's Theatre Arts Group Child Protection Policy and are issued to Youth Leaders, Directors, Stage Managers and other adults that work with children at the People's Theatre. They should be read in conjunction with other theatre policies on DBS clearances and Children in Performance guidelines.

### **Good Practice Guidelines:**

- Respect all children, as befits their age
- Do watch speech, tone of voice and body language
- Do control and maintain discipline WITHOUT physical punishment, i.e. NO Smacking
- Do make sure another adult is around during workshop or rehearsal sessions
- Do not invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting
- Every group should, where possible, have a female helper
- Each child should be aware of a leader with whom they can speak, in confidence
- Do not play rough physical or sexually provocative games
- Do not be sexually suggestive about or to a young person even in fun
- Do not touch inappropriately or intrusively
- Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or young person
- Do not show favouritism to any one child
- Do not allow children to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature
- Never give a lift to a young person or child when alone. When this is not avoidable, ask the child to sit in the back of the car
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with young people
- Do not invite a young person back to your house, alone. Invite a group.
- Supervise the children carefully, and do not permit bullying or ridiculing
- Do not allow unknown adults access to children

### **Reacting and Listening:**

The following is advice for adults working with children who may be taken into a child's confidence about abuse suffered or may include an allegation of abuse.

- Acknowledge the age of the child
- Never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues
- Allow the child time to speak and do not interrupt nor make suggestions to them that could imply making an investigation
- Do not interrogate or question other than to clarify your understanding. (If the matter is to be investigated further it will be done so by professionals).
- Do not ask the child to repeat themselves over and over, they may think you do not believe them.
- Reassure the child that you are glad that he or she has told what has happened and that it was right to tell.
- Be honest and tell the child that you cannot keep it a secret; you have to talk to someone else that can help.
- Remain calm, no matter how difficult it is to listen to the child – think of how hard it is for them to say it.
- You have been chosen because the child feels they can talk to you, try to remain neutral and not show emotion, (anger, disbelief, disgust), as the child may stop talking for fear of upsetting you further.
- Listen to the Child, and re-assure them they have done the right thing.

- As soon as is practical write down everything the child told you, but remember this is confidential and the only person you can discuss this with is the 'Child Safeguarding Officer', or in his or her absence, the Chairman.

Safeguarding Officer - Kath Frazer 07533324416 [safeguarding@peoplestheatre.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@peoplestheatre.co.uk)

Chair -Andrew De'Ath 07770537953 [andrew@peoplestheatre.co.uk](mailto:andrew@peoplestheatre.co.uk)